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U.S. War Labor Policies
Board

Report on labor situation
of Germany

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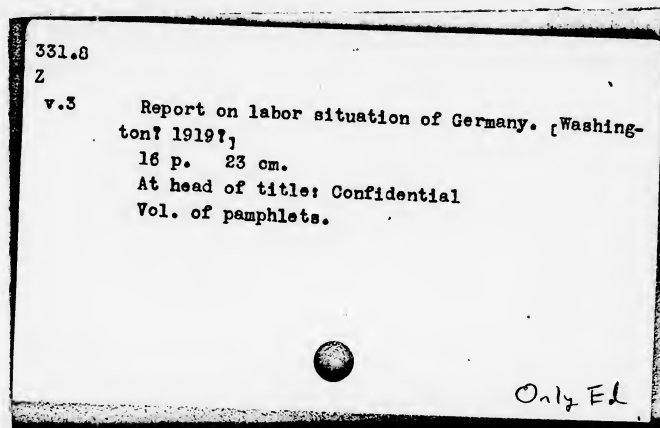
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REPORT
ON
LABOR SITUATION
of
GERMANY

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I. SUMMARY OF LABOR MOVEMENT TO 1914

A. From 1848 to 1890

The handicraft guilds and educational societies which flourished in Germany before 1848 are in no sense antecedents of the trade union movement. Although they represent a working-class effort, they lack the essential characteristic of trades unions in that they made no distinction between employers and workers. Trade unionism began with the development of industry on a large scale.

The first trade union was founded about 1848 by the printers. Early attempts of workers to organize, however, were hampered by the law prohibiting combinations and associations. It was not until the removal of this restriction in 1861 by Saxony, followed by its removal in the majority of the German States in 1868 and 1869 that trades unions began to develop freely. The organization of workers was greatly stimulated by a flood of knowledge on the development of trades unions in England which reached Germany about this time. Opposing movements were set on foot to found trade unionism in Germany. On the one hand, the radical movement, consisting of groups of Marxists or LaSalleans, favored political activity and the ultimate triumph of socialism, while the so-called "Hirsh-Duncker" trades unions on the other, believed in the ultimate harmony of capital and labor and advocated peaceful reform methods.

In 1875 the radical movement was strengthened by the formation of a Social Democratic Party composed of a union of Marxists and La Salleans. Three years later, the anti-Socialist law was passed which destroyed the Social Democratic Party.

Though the law was directed against the revolutionary methods of the Social Democratic movement, its effect was to cause the voluntary dissolution of unions which were not forced by the law to disband. Within a year from the passage of the law the whole labor movement had apparently disappeared.

The disappearance was more apparent than real, however. Trade union activity soon translated itself into the printing of trade journals which served as a cementing medium among workers. The "Shoe-

makers' Journal" appeared in 1878; the "New Carpenters' Gazette," the "Shipbuilders' Messenger" and the "Trade Unionist" issued by the tobacco workers, were launched the following year. Cautious attempts at organization were also made under the guise of friendly societies. These flourished in such large numbers that the suspension of the anti-socialist law in 1890 disclosed 58 full-fledged trade unions.

B. Modern Period 1890-1914

The development of trade unionism proceeded with vigor from this point. A movement was started to create a central trade union organization, for which purpose a trades union convention was held at Halberstadt in 1892. Subsequent conventions of this central organization were held thereafter every few years. At the 1899 convention in Frankfurt, trade union representatives from Denmark, Austria and Switzerland were present. In 1902, ten European countries were represented. Trade union relations with workers in other countries was an important consideration at these conventions.

A brief analysis of the various trade union developments between 1890 and 1914 will serve further to describe the period.

1. Free Trades Unions.

The most important trade union group is composed of the free or social democratic trades unions. Their central organization is called the General Commission of Trades Unions, which consists of a committee of thirteen members elected by a congress of delegates from the 47 centralized unions. The main purpose of the Commission is to encourage trade union organization. Connected with it are two secretariats, one to promote trade unionism among workers, the other to assist trade union members in the presentation of their claims for Government insurance.

In 1911 a department of social research was established for the purpose of preparing social legislation to be presented by socialist and labor members of the Reichstag and State parliaments. The Commission cooperates closely with the Social Democratic Party in its efforts on behalf of social reform.

The free trade union movement rests its strength largely on its elaborate educational program. The General Commission has established a Trade Union School at Berlin supported and managed by trade unionists. The School provides a six weeks' course of instruction to about sixty selected members of unions, who are given a full maintenance grant by their unions for the term of study. The Commission has also elaborated an educational program for the

affiliated federations. The average trade unionist of this class is therefore highly self-conscious by comparison with trade unionists in other countries.

2. Christian Trades Unions

This group of unions represents a development away from social democratic trade unionism and is much influenced by the Roman Catholic Church. Its growth has been greatest in regions dominated by Catholicism and has been characterized by a tendency to break up into local industrial groups rather than to form one cohesive organization. The movement is founded on a belief in the ultimate harmony of employers and employees and is relentlessly opposed to social democratic ideas, although members of Christian Trades Unions have occasionally joined with members of social democratic unions in strikes and lockouts. The clerical leaders of the Christian Unions look askance on such combinations, being jealous alike of the influence of other industrial as well as other religious groups.

3. Hirsch-Duncker Trades Unions

The membership of these unions is taken mainly from the engineering and factory trades. Each trade or industry has its own national organization which is represented in an association of all the national federations called the Central Council. The Council determines the membership policies of the unions and manages the general Congresses which are held regularly.

The Hirsch-Duncker Unions, like the Christian Trades Unions, believe in social betterment by peaceful means. They are opposed to the strike but favor arbitration and the wage agreement. They allow themselves to become affiliated with social reform organizations and eschew the social democratic movement. They have no political alliances and prefer free competition to State interference.

During the period of the enforcement of the anti-socialist law, this body of trade unionists was unmolested and grew rapidly in number. Their influence on the labor movement, however, has never been strong.

4. "Yellow" Trade Unions

The first "yellow" trade union was organized among machine workers in 1905. The name originated in France and is applied to labor organizations opposed to violent methods. The French "yellow" syndicalists and German "yellow" trade unions, while similar in fundamental principle, exhibit sharp differences however. Profit

sharing, which is an important tenet of the French movement, has little foothold in Germany.

The German "yellow" movement, like the Hirsch-Duncker and Christian unions, aims to find the points of contact between employer and employee and is opposed to social democracy. It has no central organization, however, and is, on the whole, one of the weaker movements.

5. Other Trade Union and Industrial Organizations

In addition to the well-defined trade union development described above, there are a number of organizations of a miscellaneous character. Such are the various independent, local associations of clerks, commercial travellers and officials of various kinds, which have a certain trade union character and yet are not accurately described as trades unions. There are the cooperative organizations always related in spirit and purpose to the labor movement. The most important group are the industrialists, who grew up partly to oppose the power of the social democratic unions. The industrialists are close to the government and share the latter's desire to stem the tide of social democracy by timely social legislation.

II. LABOR MOVEMENT 1914-1918

Without access to confidential sources, information concerning the German labor movement during the years of the war is necessarily meagre. Such as can be obtained may be summarized as (A) The development of machinery for dealing with labor problems; (B) Trade Union activity with reference to domestic affairs, and (C) with reference to the international situation.

A. Machinery for Dealing with Labor Problems

Special machinery created by the war to meet the industrial needs of the time are briefly summarized as follows:

1. Labor Community Councils. These Councils represent a mutual effort of employers and workers at the beginning of the war to obviate the ills of an unevenly distributed labor supply. Each industry had its own Labor Council, consisting of an equal number of representatives of employers and trade unions. As the war progressed, the care of disabled soldiers was added to the Council.

2. In the spirit of these Councils, agreements were often made between employers and employees of a given industry whereby both pledged themselves to adhere to a given wage scale and to refrain from labor disputes for a given period of time.

3. In order to meet the shortage of labor, especially of skilled labor in transportation, a limited liability company was formed in 1917 by certain commercial and industrial interests in the Leipzig district. The company rented the services of its skilled workers for a limited time, paying them according to an agreed scale, and was in turn paid by the employer a sum equal to the wage plus an additional amount. The municipal labor exchange supervised the administration of the company, but there was no representative of labor in its organization.

4. The National Auxiliary Service Law of December, 1916, establishing workshop committees in certain industries which had not already done so in pursuance of the Industrial Code, is the most important piece of labor legislation of the war period.

5. In October, 1918, an Imperial Labor Department was created to deal with social and economic questions. Herr Gustav Bauer, a Social Democratic member of the Reichstag, was appointed to preside over the Department. The change was one which Social Democrats had desired for many years, and was a further extension of the reform which took place the preceding July when the Imperial Economic Department was created. At that time organized labor demanded that during the period of transition from a war to a peace regime, representatives of all branches of labor should be consulted in matters considered by the Department involving the interests of the working classes. The same was demanded with respect to the preparation of future commercial relations. It was requested that the National Economic Advisory Council should include representatives of labor from industries or trades involved in commercial agreements.

6. On November 15, 1918, an agreement was made between employers' associations and trades unions containing the following provisions —

- a. A standard eight-hour day.
- b. Acceptance by employers of the principle of collective bargaining.
- c. Establishment of committees of employers' and employees' representatives to see that agreements are carried out in each trade.
- d. Establishment of a central committee of employers' and employees' representatives to superintend general problems of industry.

B. Trade Union Activity

The first year of the war increased the prestige of trades unions. So effective was the cooperation of the trades unions in emergency measures, particularly in regard to the food supply, that in 1915 the German Chancellor declared "trades unions have, since the beginning of the war shown a most commendable and disinterested spirit of self-sacrifice in coming forward to help the Fatherland in both internal and external demands."

In March, 1917, a joint Memorandum bearing on monopolies was presented to the Chancellor by three labor groups—the free, Christian, and Hirsch-Duncker trades unions. The subject of monopolies and their effect on labor engaged considerable attention in 1916 and 1917. In 1917 and 1918 the problems incident to demobilization and the return of peace conditions were much discussed by employers' and employees organizations. A Reconstruction Committee was formed

by social-economic and trade union organizations. A Peoples' League for Liberty and Country was also organized. Groups of disabled soldiers formed an organization to have oversight of the industrial needs of men incapacitated by the war for full participation in industry. This organization, called the Association of Disabled Soldiers, had the sympathy and cooperation of the trades unions.

Two reform programs were laid before the Reichstag by trade union groups in 1917 and 1918. The first was presented by the General Commission of Trades Unions and bore on the problems of reconstruction. A complete reorganization of government offices dealing with labor was urged, including a Ministry of Labor, compulsory establishment of workshop committees in all plants having more than 20 employees, repeal of all legislation discouraging the right of combination, establishment of a system of arbitration courts for industrial disputes, an international code of labor legislation, and many other important and far-reaching measures. The program was adopted in its entirety by the Austrian labor groups and by them presented to the Reichstag in 1918. The origin of the German program may possibly be traced to the conference of free trade union federations in July, 1917.

The second reform program was presented to the Reichstag by the Central Association of German Forestry, Agricultural and Vineyard Workers in 1918.

In politics the trade union movement has been represented by the Social Democratic Party since 1906 when a definite agreement was made between the Party and the unions. The split in 1914 between pro-war and anti-war factions of the Party resulted in labor's following the pro-government element and expressing itself in vigorous opposition to the Independents. Great bitterness was aroused by attempts of the latter to win adherents from the ranks of the unions. In the spring and summer of 1916 the effect of the blockade caused considerable industrial unrest. The majority of the unions remained loyal to the old Social Democratic Party, but a few of their leaders went over to the Independent Socialists. In Leipzig, where the Minority was strong, seven trade unions were induced to leave the General Commission of Trades Unions and form an Independent Trades Union Center. This separation lasted until December, 1917, when the insurgents returned to the central organization.

C. Attitude of Trades Unions Towards International Questions

Active relations with unions outside of Germany ceased with the

war. Legien, a labor leader, and president of the International Federation of Trades Unions, in August, 1916, tried to preserve international labor relations through the medium of neutral countries. As a result of his efforts, a subordinate executive office was established at Amsterdam early in 1915. Allied trade federations insisted on the removal of international headquarters itself and as this could be done only by authority of an international conference, such a conference was called by the Swiss Federation at Berne in October, 1917. Only representatives from the Central Powers and neutral countries were present and the specific purpose for which the conference was called was not accomplished. This conference had considerable significance nevertheless, in the history of international labor relations during the war.

According to a German wireless of October 19, 1918, the German Labor Congress has issued the following appeal:—"We are striving for a just peace under the guarantee of a League of Nations, and one in which the honor and vital interests of the German Empire and the German people will be assured. German economic life must find the world open at the reconstruction of the world. We are prepared to support any government which strives for a peace on such a basis."

At the same time, the General Committee of the Trades Unions of Germany was declaring: "We are prepared for the most resolute resistance if the enemy rejects any far-reaching offer. We have no intention of making peace at any price."

On November 17, 1918, a German wireless reported that German trade union leaders welcomed the victory of political freedom in the name of more than two million organized German workers.

Since that time trades unions have renewed demands already made to the German Government to have provisions for the protection of workmen embodied in the peace treaty and asking that trade union representatives be included in the German delegation to the Peace Conference.

APPENDIX A

STATISTICS

1. Number of Organized Workers in Germany as Compared with Other Countries (1912)

Germany.....	3,317,271
United Kingdom.....	3,023,173
United States.....	2,496,000
France.....	1,064,413
Austria.....	534,811
Belgium.....	231,805
Holland.....	169,144
Denmark.....	139,012
Sweden.....	121,866
Hungary.....	111,966
Italy.....	86,052
Norway.....	60,975

2. Membership of Trade Unions

From: Sonderheft 13 zum Reichsarbeitsblatte. 1916

		Free Trade Unions	Christian Trades Unions	Hirsch-Independent Duncker Trades Unions	Yellow Trades Unions	Catholic Labor Associations (Berlin)	League of Catholic Working Women of Germany	Total
Membership...	1907	1,873,246	284,649	108,889	127,400	59,007		2,453,100
"	1908	1,797,963	290,767	105,633	193,824	97,870	123,000	2,602,057
"	1909	1,892,568	280,061	108,028	231,125	88,896	127,000	2,754,678
"	1910	2,128,021	316,115	122,571	269,599	121,126	129,000	3,114,432
"	1911	2,421,465	350,574	107,743	285,858	170,192	128,000	3,494,132
"	1912	2,583,492	350,930	109,225	298,185	224,299	125,614	3,721,745
"	1913	2,525,042	341,735	106,618	318,508	280,002	124,253	3,726,158
"	1914	1,502,811	218,197	77,749	205,360	167,074	100,971	2,302,162

3. Strikes,* Number, Extent, Cost and Outcome

O U T C O M E															
Year	No. of Disputes	No. of Strikes	Loss in Time Days	NUMBER					PER CENT.					Not Ended Jan. 1	Total Cost
				Succ- ess- ful	Partly Succ- ess- ful	Fail ure	Un- known	Succ- ess- ful	Succ- ess- ful	Fail- ed					
1908	2052	126,883	2,045,585	891	398	678	49	44.2	19.7	33.6	36	4,477,036			
1909	2043	131,244	2,247,512	1132	328	485	49	44.1	16.4	24.3	51	5,934,453			
1910	3194	369,011	9,037,575	1083	974	467	14	53.6	31.0	14.9	56	18,457,769			
1911	2914	325,253	6,864,240	1826	427	530	12	65.3	15.3	19.0	119	16,062,906			
1912	2825	479,589	4,776,818	1732	458	538	63	61.7	16.4	19.3	45	11,486,365			
1913	2600	248,986	5,672,034	1626	422	497	2	63.8	16.6	19.5	53	14,566,973			
1914	1409	96,681	1,759,933	810	196	394	9	57.5	13.9	28.0	...	4,738,473			
1915	66	2,221	6,511	48	9	8	..	73.8	14.9	12.3	...	9,726			
1916	142	14,639	36,555	114	16	12	..	80.3	11.3	8.4	...	67,354			

* Trades Union Figures.

APPENDIX B

PERSONNEL

(Social Democrats now prominent in the Government, such as Scheidemann and Ebert, are omitted.)

Gustav Bauer. Appointed secretary of the Labor Department created in 1918. Is Vice-President of the General Commission of Trades Unions. Member of Commission since 1908. Member of Reichstag since 1912. Has played no conspicuous part, but ranks as hard worker and authority on sick insurance. Social Democrat.

Wilhelm Bock. Member of Reichstag 1884-87, 1890-1906, 1912-. President of Shoemakers' Union. Presided at Gotha Social Democratic Conference in 1875 and again at the Gotha Conference in 1917 when the Independent Social Democratic Party was formed. Minority Social Democrat.

Edward Bernstein. From 1888-1901 lived abroad, mostly in London. Has sympathetic understanding of English conditions and before the war contributed to English periodicals. Has translated many English books. Member of Reichstag 1902-06, 1912-. Author of books on Socialism. Principal exponent in German Social Democracy of Revisionists. At beginning of war was a Majority Social Democrat, but later went over to the Minority.

Wilhelm Dittman. Secretary of Sozial Demokratische Arbeitsgemeinschaft. In October, 1917, was charged with complicity, together with Haase and Vogtherr, in mutiny in German fleet. Arrested in Berlin on February 1, 1918, when attempting to address a crowd in a Berlin suburb, and sentenced to five year's imprisonment for inciting to high treason. Independent Social Democrat.

Otto Fischbeck. Member of Prussian Chamber of Deputies, 1903. Member Reichstag 1895-03, 1907-. Leader of the Progressives and chairman of the inter-party committee. Is one of the inner circle of Moderates, belongs with the Left Wing. Deeply intelligent and a sincere democrat. Opposed pan-Germanists. Advocates full parliamentary government.

Wolfgang Heine. Majority Socialist of the Imperialistic group.

Counted with David and Scheidemann among the far-sighted leaders of his Party. Member of the Constitution Committee of 1917.

Karl Kautsky. Theoretically the most dominant person of the International Social Democracy. No one has expounded the principles of socialism with such authority and such extensive knowledge. On August 4, 1914, at the meeting called by the social democratic members of the Reichstag for the purpose of deciding what stand the Party should take on the war, Kautsky was for abstaining from voting altogether. However, at the beginning of the war, it seemed to him that the maintenance of Party unity was a consideration overruling all others. Later developments led him to take a different attitude and to associate himself with the Independent Socialists.

Georg Ledebour. One of the editors of the Berlin Vorwärts. Before the war belonged to the Minority Socialists. On August 3 and 4, 1914, at a special meeting of the group called to decide what stand the Party should take in the war, Ledebour was among the three who voted to the last against the war budget.

Karl Legien. Secretary of the International Bureau of the Trade Union movement. Member of the Reichstag since 1893, except for one term. Was a leading pro-war Socialist.

Paul Lensch. Formerly editor of the "Leipziger Volkszeitung." At the August 3, 1914, meeting of German Socialists, Lensch was not only against the war credits, but urged, with Liebknecht, that the party should vote against them. A few months later he produced a book in which he declared that Germany must win the war because Germany represents Socialism, England reaction and capitalism. Member of Reichstag 1912-.

Franz Mehring. Has written a history of the development of the German Socialist movement, books on Russian history, and was for many years the editorial writer of the "Neue Zeit." Belongs to the Liebknecht group. Early in war, in collaboration with Rosa Luxemburg, he started the new periodical "Die Internationale," which was suppressed after one issue.

Dr. August Muller. Worked for the diffusion of the cooperative movement, and so became intimately acquainted with conditions of production. On the creation of the War Food Bureau, he was appointed one of its Directors, in order to represent the working classes. He is a declared adherent of the Social Democratic Party, but has not played much part in politics.

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